

EuCan: Exploring the unmet needs of Irish cancer patients from underserved communities



Trinity Centre
for Ageing and
Intellectual Disability

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Background

By 2040, it is projected that 28 million cancer cases will be diagnosed annually worldwide. Cancer is currently the leading cause of death in Ireland. For certain specific groups, including people with physical and intellectual disabilities and those over the age of 65, research documenting the barriers and potential enablers to increase timely access is lacking. A greater understanding of these issues is necessary to help reduce cancer care inequalities and inequities in underserved populations. By addressing these factors, the study seeks to improve diagnosis and treatment processes for these vulnerable populations.



Aim

This study aims to identify specific barriers and enablers, generating evidence related to timely access to cancer care for people with physical and intellectual disabilities and those over the age of 65.

Method

To address the research aim, the EuCan study incorporates five Work Packages (WP) utilising both qualitative and quantitative methods.

WP1 & WP2: Waves 1–5 of IDS-TILDA data and Waves 1–6 of TILDA data explore cancer prevalence, incidence, and associated determinants across the three populations.

WP3: Focus groups and 1:1 interviews (N = 18) were conducted with healthcare professionals (HCPs) to explore barriers and enablers to cancer care. Figure 1 provides details on HCP participation.

WP4: Individual interviews are being conducted with cancer survivors from the three populations to explore their experiences of cancer diagnosis and care

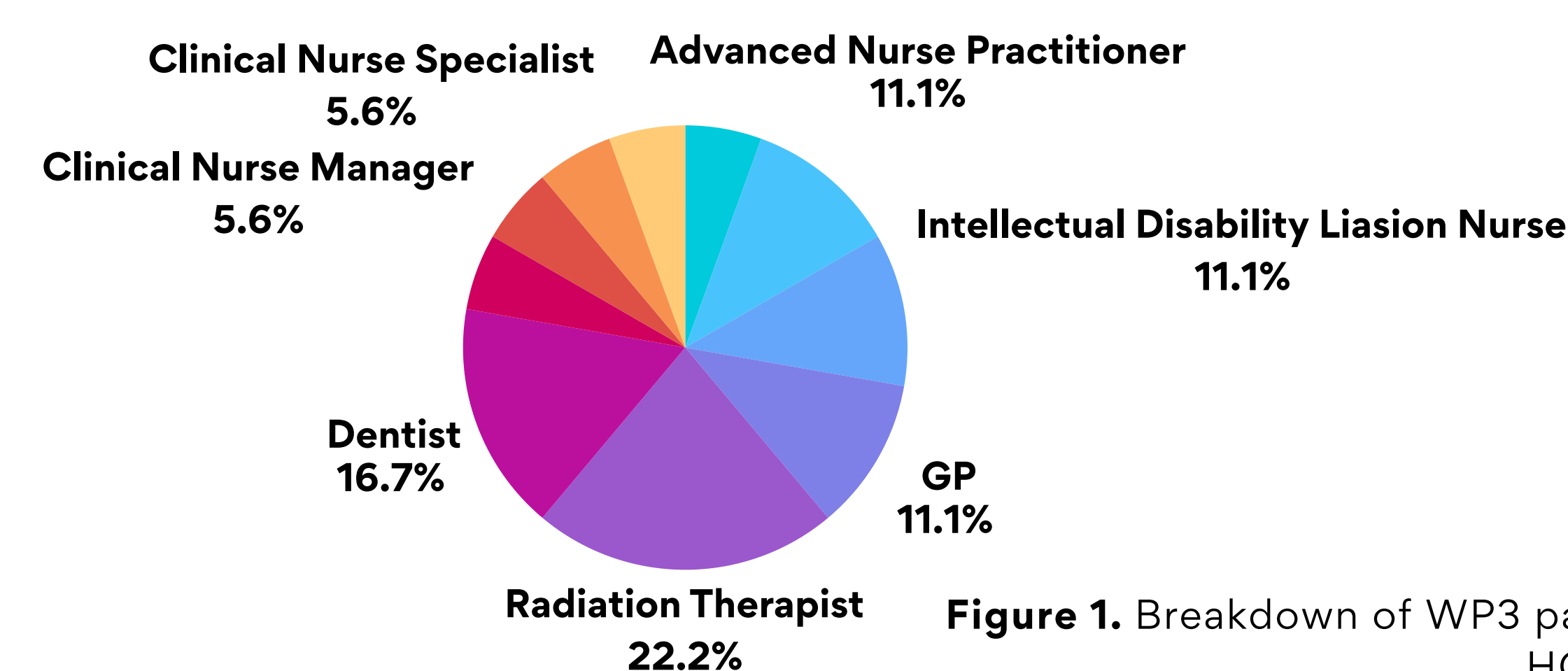


Figure 1. Breakdown of WP3 participation, by HCP profession.

Emerging findings

Similar coverage of colorectal and breast cancer screening has been observed, but there is lower uptake of cervical cancer screening among people with intellectual disabilities.

Differences noted between self-reported cancer diagnoses and recorded causes of death in people with intellectual disability

Reported barriers

- difficulty in communicating symptoms
- inability to travel to appointments
- lack of support to access care

“..WE’RE ALL FIRE FIGHTING AND WE’RE NOT THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE AND CANCER CARE IS GOING TO EXPLODE IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS AND WE ALL KNOW IT, WE’VE ALL SEEN IT, CAPACITY IS LITERALLY AT BREAKING POINT.”
~ PHARMACIST

Reported enablers

- reasonable adjustments, for example longer appointment slots for underserved populations
- specialised training for staff to develop communication skills are essential.
- increased awareness of low health literacy levels.

“..ONE OF THE BIGGEST THINGS THAT PEOPLE TALK ABOUT WHEN UP IN THE HOSPITAL, IN ACUTE SETTING, IS THE COMMUNICATION GAP, AND THAT’S WHAT THE ACUTE SETTING NEEDS SUPPORT IN.”
~ INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY LIASION NURSE

Summary

The EuCan study forms part of a broader strategy to improve cancer outcomes in marginalised and hard to reach groups. It highlights new and largely unexplored issues, paving the way for targeted interventions.

Acknowledgement

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